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USC faculty call for more transparency and accountability after college admissions scandal



USC finds itself caught up in a nationwide college admissions scandal, the latest to rock the university in recent years. (Reed Saxon / Associated Press)

MARCH 29, 2019
5:35 PM



A group of USC faculty members is demanding more transparency and accountability in the wake of a college admissions scandal that drew national headlines, the latest in a series of scandals to rock the private university in recent years.

“USC is again at the center of a scandal involving corruption, greed, and a failure of administrative oversight and accountability,” the Concerned Faculty of USC, a group of about 350 professors, said [in a statement](#) this week decrying the scam.

More than half of the 33 parents named in charging documents filed in U.S. District Court in Boston earlier this month are accused of paying to get their children's way into USC. A high-ranking athletic administrator and a legendary water polo coach [were fired two weeks ago](#) after allegedly receiving hundreds of thousands of dollars in bribes. The campus also began termination proceedings against a professor allegedly involved in the scheme.

In its statement, the faculty group called on university administrators to appoint a faculty-led committee to oversee an investigation of admissions and athletics.

"USC's handling of past wrongdoing has engendered so much distrust in our community that we bear an extra burden to act on this case with the highest level of transparency, accountability, and faculty governance," the professors wrote.

Last summer, after [The Times revealed](#) serial sexual abuse allegations against longtime student health gynecologist Dr. George Tyndall, about 200 faculty members came together to ask then-President C.L. Max Nikias to step down, said USC professor Manuel Pastor, who serves on the faculty member's eight-person steering committee. Tyndall, who resigned in 2017, has denied any wrongdoing.

Since then, the faculty group has grown to 350, and pushed for change in the culture and administration of the university. It has inserted itself in discussions with the campus' Academic Senate to develop a new governance structure that gives more weight to faculty, Pastor said.


Concerned Faculty of USC also called on USC's Board of Trustees to disclose the findings of completed investigations into Tyndall and former medical school Dean Carmen Puliafito who was forced out two years ago amid allegations of severe drug use. The public, the group said, has been kept in the dark about those findings.

"USC must let the sun shine in," the teachers said.

Concerned Faculty of USC isn't the only group to mobilize.

Earlier this month, a group of faculty from the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism pledged to launch a collaborative student-faculty reporting initiative that would "seek to discover the full facts of the recent admissions cheating case, as

well as previous scandals, of equal or greater gravity,” according to [a statement tweeted by Mark Schoofs](#).




Mark Schoofs
 @SchoofsFeed

Here is the @USCAnnenberg Journalism School faculty's statement on the college bribery & cheating scandal.

Proud of my colleagues.

Fight on.



SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

March 18, 2019

The journalism and public relations faculty of USC Annenberg state the following:

- 1) We know firsthand how diligent and hard-working our students are. We want to acknowledge the pain and distress that this most recent gross lapse of governance and accountability at the university is causing. It is a personal affront to the effort and integrity that Annenberg students have given toward their studies.
- 2) Transparency, honesty and accountability are at the core of the journalism and public relations professions. For that reason, we believe we have a moral and intellectual obligation to speak out and demand that USC uphold these values.
- 3) We pledge to immediately launch a collaborative student-faculty reporting initiative. This initiative will seek to discover the full facts of the recent admissions cheating case, as well as previous scandals, of equal or greater gravity. It will explore the university's culture and governance failures, especially its lack of transparency and documented tendency to turn a blind eye. The initiative will operate independently of the university administration in all matters, and publish independent journalistic work that sheds light on these issues.
- 4) We also pledge to begin working on a series of joint public relations student-faculty projects that will address the university's abject failure to communicate honestly and regularly with its constituents.
- 5) We believe these two initiatives embody a positive affirmation of our values as a school and failure to act would constitute a failure of our professional duties.
- 6) In addition to the steps outlined above, we pledge to investigate the fundamental inequities of the university's admissions systems and lack of transparency.

65 1:46 PM - Mar 18, 2019

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Faculty members said they also welcome new leadership. Carol L. Folt, who most recently served as chancellor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, was [chosen unanimously](#) by a search committee to be the next president of USC. She will start her term July 1.

“There’s a bit of hope at USC right now that the new president understands the need to involve the faculty in more governance, and a need to be far more transparent,” Pastor said.

USC has already responded more rapidly and with more concern and forthrightness to the admissions scandal than in previous cases, he said.

“I think people are optimistic about where things might head from here,” Pastor said. “That’s probably the right attitude to have as we turn the page on the revelations over the past year.”

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